

## CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE MINUTES

June 14, 2016

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a conference at 5:53 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 14th day of June, 2016, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray, and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Allison, Castleberry, Heiple, Holman, Jungman, Karjala, Lang, Miller, Mayor Rosenthal

ABSENT: None

Item 1, being:

PRESENTATION FROM MARK NANNY, GREENBELT COMMISSION CHAIRMAN, REGARDING A PROPOSED PRIORITY GREENBELT TRAIL SYSTEM FOR THE CITY OF NORMAN.

Mr. Mark Nanny, Chair of the Greenbelt Commission, said greenbelts protect natural areas and open space with a system of land parcels that work together to help maintain the beauty and livability of the City. Greenbelts consist of public parks, golf courses, and nature preserves or can be a system of trails between parks and other open spaces that allow people to walk, run, bike, skate, or ride horses. These trails are typically publicly owned and open to the public. Greenbelts can also be large areas of privately owned land which may not allow public access, but will help beautify the City. An example of privately owned greenbelts is farmland dedicated to permanent agricultural use and portions of private residential developments set aside for open space.

On June 25, 2015, the Greenbelt Commission presented a proposal for developing the City of Norman Greenbelt Trail System to the Community Planning and Transportation Committee (CPTC) and the CPTC requested the Greenbelt Commission develop a map with criteria for priority trails as addenda to the Parks Master Plan (PMP) and Greenway Master Plan (GMP).

On September 21, 2015, the Greenbelt Commission voted unanimously to present the development of three trail systems to the CPTC. The Greenbelt Commission believes the three trails will be an essential foundation for a more extensive system through urban and rural Norman. When completed, the three trails will form a loop around urban Norman, connect to the west shoreline of Lake Thunderbird, allow pedestrian travel from central downtown Norman to Lake Thunderbird, and travel southward from central Norman to the southeast quadrant of Norman south of Highway 9 where new development is occurring.

Mr. Nanny said each trail will have a unique theme relating to Norman's history, flora and fauna, or watersheds and aquatic ecosystems with interactive educational/informational kiosks, plaques, and art work highlighting distinctive ecological and historical/cultural facilities. He highlighted the three proposed trails as follows:

### The Little River Trail

The Little River Trail starts at Ruby Grant Park and extends eastward along Little River all the way to the west shore of Lake Thunderbird. At Lake Thunderbird, it travels southward along the west shoreline until it connects with the Scissortail Trail at the Alameda Bridge. The theme of Little River Trail emphasizes aquatic ecosystems, the role of rivers and creeks in central Oklahoma, the importance of the preservation and conservation of watersheds and stream beds, and the need to protect our water resources.

### The Scissortail Trail

The Scissortail Trail travels along East Highway 9 from southeast Norman to Dave Blue Creek where it then follows northeast along Dave Blue Creek towards the west coast of Lake Thunderbird. At Lake Thunderbird, the trail will go northward along the west shore until it connects with Little River Trail at the Alameda Bridge. The theme of the Scissortail Trail will focus on the flora and fauna of central Oklahoma highlighting seasonal wildflowers, wildlife and bird identification and their behaviors and habitats, and the unique ecological features of meadows, creek beds, and forested areas of central Oklahoma.

### The South Legacy Trail

The South Legacy Trail connects with the current Legacy Trail at its southern terminus just southeast of downtown Norman and continues southward linking Brandt Park (OU Duck Pond), apartments, and high-density developments along Classen Boulevard with the south OU Campus and on into the far southeast area of Norman, south of Highway 9. This trail will also connect with Scissortail Trail, thereby connecting south central and southeast Norman with trails to Lake Thunderbird. The South Legacy Trail will continue to highlight the history of Norman and central Oklahoma focusing on the historical and cultural contributions of under-represented groups.

Mr. Nanny said promotional and public uses could include community events, such as fun runs; year-round access to nature; recreation activities; urban transportation alternatives, such as bicycles and pedestrians; and development of the Little River as recreation area.

The next steps would include adoption of a resolution into the GMP and PMP; integrating trails with Norman Forward efforts; incorporating trails into the City of Norman Comprehensive Plan; identifying avenues for developing/funding trails; and creating incentives for private property owners/developers to allow trail access and building trails.

Councilmember Miller said she loves the names and themes of the trails.

Councilmember Castleberry asked if any of the trails currently exist and Mr. Nanny said a few trails exist, but the majority are new or expanded trails.

Councilmember Karjala asked if the trails will be American with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant and Mr. Nanny said many will be ADA compliant throughout the urban areas, but there will be a few trails that will naturally be hiking trails. He said there are many existing natural nature areas that are ADA accessible.

Councilmember Allison understands some funding has been identified through Norman Forward, but asked how much funding is needed for these projects and where it is coming from. Mr. Nanny said some funding will be through Norman Forward projects and other funding will be incorporated from park projects, development, etc.; however there is no dedicated funding stream at this time. Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager, said Norman Forward projects include Legacy Trail extension, upgrading existing neighborhood parks, and Ruby Grant Park development. Mayor Rosenthal said as projects are developed, trail components can be incorporated into those projects.

Councilmember Miller said there has been discussion regarding a conservation easement that includes a portion of Little River and part of the stream corridor that could be used for trails. Also, Council has discussed using Storm Water Utility (SWU) funds by incorporating trails into SWU projects.

Councilmember Holman asked if grants are available and Mr. Nanny said the Greenbelt Commission has not looked into that yet, but there could possibly be grant money available. He said the Greenbelt Commission will look at what other communities do for trail systems as well. Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, said the grant for Highway 9 East is a transportation grant and a few years ago Staff applied for a National Parks Grant, but was unsuccessful in obtaining that grant. He said adopting a Comprehensive Plan is critical to obtaining grant funding and Mayor Rosenthal agreed because a Comprehensive Plan shows how Norman wants to develop. She said the connectivity between the three proposed trails is a great framework going forward and congratulated the Greenbelt Commission on their hard work.

Councilmember Heiple said bicycle lanes were once a dream, but are now coming to fruition and although it may take years, the trail system will come to fruition as well.

Mayor Rosenthal asked Staff to draft a resolution reflecting this proposal to bring forward to Council.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated June 10, 2016, from Susan Connors, AICP, Director of Planning and Community Development Department, to Mayor and Councilmembers
2. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Proposed Priority Greenbelt Trail System," City Council Study Session dated June 14, 2016

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
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City Clerk



  
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Mayor